

1 AN ACT concerning veterans.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the  
5 Veterans' Home Nurses' Loan Repayment Act.

6 Section 5. Nurse Loan Repayment Program. There is created,  
7 beginning July 1, 2007, the Nurse Loan Repayment Program to be  
8 administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission in  
9 consultation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The  
10 program shall provide assistance, subject to appropriation, to  
11 eligible nurses.

12 Section 10. Award; maximum time period; maximum amount.  
13 Subject to appropriation, the Commission shall award a grant to  
14 each applicant who qualifies under this Act. An individual may  
15 receive a grant under this Act each year for up to 4 years. The  
16 amount of this grant may not exceed \$5,000 per recipient per  
17 year. The Commission shall require the recipient of a grant  
18 awarded under the program to use the grant award for payment of  
19 the recipient's educational loan.

20 Section 15. Application. All applications for grant  
21 assistance under the program must be made to the Commission in

1 a form and manner prescribed by the Commission. Applicants  
2 shall also submit any supporting documents deemed necessary by  
3 the Commission at the time of application.

4 Section 20. Eligibility.

5 (a) The Commission shall, on an annual basis, receive and  
6 consider applications for grant assistance under the program.  
7 An applicant is eligible for a grant under the program if the  
8 Commission finds that the applicant:

9 (1) is a United States citizen or permanent resident;

10 (2) is a resident of Illinois;

11 (3) is working as a registered professional nurse or  
12 licensed practical nurse in a State veterans' home;

13 (4) is a borrower with an outstanding balance due on an  
14 educational loan; and

15 (5) has not defaulted on an educational loan.

16 (b) Preference may be given to previous recipients of a  
17 grant under the program, provided that the recipient continues  
18 to meet the eligibility requirements set forth in this Section.

19 (c) For each year during which an individual receives a  
20 grant under this program, he or she must fulfill a separate  
21 12-month period as a registered professional nurse or licensed  
22 practical nurse in a State veterans' home.

23 Section 900. The Department of Veterans Affairs Act is  
24 amended by adding Sections 8 and 9 as follows:

1 (20 ILCS 2805/8 new)

2 Sec. 8. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Outpatient  
3 Counseling Program. Subject to appropriations for that  
4 purpose, the Department, in consultation with the Department of  
5 Human Services, shall contract with professional counseling  
6 specialists to provide a range of confidential counseling and  
7 direct treatment services to war-affected Southwest Asia  
8 combat veterans and their family members, and to provide  
9 additional treatment services to Viet Nam War veterans for  
10 post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly those Viet Nam  
11 veterans whose post-traumatic stress disorder has intensified  
12 or initially emerged due to the war in the Middle East. Any  
13 such contracts entered into by the Department must be with  
14 individuals and entities pre-approved by the U.S. Department of  
15 Veterans Affairs and must be for the provision of services  
16 pre-approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In  
17 consultation with the Department of Human Services, the  
18 Department shall:

19 (1) develop an educational program designed to inform  
20 and train primary health care professionals, including  
21 mental health professionals, about the effects of  
22 war-related stress and trauma;

23 (2) provide informational and counseling services for  
24 the purpose of establishing and fostering peer-support  
25 networks throughout the State for families of deployed

1 members of the reserves and the Illinois National Guard;  
2 and

3 (3) provide for veterans' families a referral network  
4 of mental health providers who are skilled in treating  
5 deployment stress, combat stress, and post-traumatic  
6 stress.

7 As used in this Section, "Southwest Asia combat veteran"  
8 means an Illinois resident who is, or who was honorably  
9 discharged as, a member of the Armed Forces of the United  
10 States, a member of the Illinois National Guard, or a member of  
11 any reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States  
12 and who served on active duty in connection with Operation  
13 Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, or Operation Iraqi  
14 Freedom.

15 (20 ILCS 2805/9 new)

16 Sec. 9. Veterans Conservation Corps. Subject to  
17 appropriations for that purpose, the Department shall create a  
18 list of honorably discharged veterans, particularly those with  
19 post-traumatic stress disorder and related conditions, who are  
20 interested in working on a volunteer basis on projects that  
21 restore Illinois' natural habitat. The list is referred to as  
22 the Veterans Conservation Corps. The Department shall promote  
23 the opportunity to volunteer for the Veterans Conservation  
24 Corps through its field offices and through cooperating  
25 veterans organizations. Only veterans who grant their approval

1 may be included on the list. The Department shall consult with  
2 the Department of Natural Resources to determine the most  
3 effective way to market the Veterans Conservation Corps to  
4 State agencies and local governmental or not-for-profit  
5 sponsors of habitat restoration projects.

6 Section 999. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
7 becoming law.